

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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LAKES AND RIVERS EXPECTING BIG CROWDS FOR HOLIDAY WEEKEND

DES MOINES – The summer is here and the warm weather predicted for the July 4 holiday weekend will send people to the water by the thousands.

“Hot summer weather and a long holiday weekend get people thinking ‘Got to boat – Get on the water’,” said DNR Recreational Safety Program Coordinator Rod Slings. “Our waterways will be crowded this weekend and law enforcement officers will be out among the boaters. Our goal is that everyone has a good, safe time on the water.”

People heading to Iowa rivers should keep in mind the recent rains have raised water levels in many interior streams. Fast flowing water is a safety concern, especially around downed trees and low head dams.

Slings said boaters would be wise to go through a checklist before they leave home. They should make sure there are enough properly fitting lifejackets for everyone onboard the vessel, that the fire extinguisher is on board and fully recharged and the lights work.

“Backing down the boat ramp is not the time to find out your battery is not working or that the throwable life preserver is in the basement,” Slings said. “We want everyone heading out to the waterways to have a good safe time and to be courteous to fellow boats on the water and on the ramps.”

With the crowded conditions expected on Iowa waterways this weekend, it is critical to follow proper boating safety and operate defensively, he said. “The best piece of advice I

can give boat operators is don't operate faster than the conditions allow, and stay away from alcohol," Slings said.

Personal watercraft operators aged 12 through 17 are reminded they must have successfully completed a boater education course and have their certificate of completion on board. A course is available on-line at www.iowadnr.com/law/news/pwclaw.html

Iowa DNR law enforcement officers will be covering big water bodies, small streams and lakes looking for all types of reckless operation that would indicate operating while intoxicated. If someone witnesses or suspects drunk boat operators, Slings said they should call 911 and they will be referred to state radio who will dispatch a conservation officer to investigate. Conservation officer's cell phone numbers are listed in the Iowa Boating Regulations and the Iowa Hunting, Fishing and Trapping regulations booklet.

For more information, contact Slings at 515-281-8652.

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STATE PARK CAMPGROUNDS FILLING FAST FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY

DES MOINES – Iowa state park campgrounds are filling quickly in anticipation of the July 4 holiday weekend, and many of the more popular parks will soon be full. Campers who cannot get out until Thursday or Friday should call the park before heading out to see if any campsites remain.

“Many of the electrical sites at our more popular campgrounds – Rock Creek, the Gull Point complex, Ledges, Backbone, Clear Lake – are probably filled. But there are a number of other state parks where campsites may be available if people are willing to try a new experience,” said Sherry Arntzen, with the DNR's conservation and recreation division.

Those parks include Nine Eagles, Red Haw, Wapsipinicon, Honey Creek, Lacey-Keosauqua, Keomah and Union Grove. Information on all state parks is available on-line at www.exploreiowaparks.com.

Campers are reminded that the parks will be extremely busy for the holiday and they should be mindful of their fellow campers. Fireworks are not allowed in state parks. “Observe quiet hours,” Arntzen said. “Everyone is out there to relax and have a good time.”

Fireworks displays are scheduled at Lewis and Clark, Lake of Three Fires, Lake Manawa, Okoboji and Lake Macbride state parks. Red Haw State Park will host its

annual cardboard boat races at 1 p.m., July 5. Check with local park officials to see if any interpretive programs are scheduled.

Arntzen said campers should plan to bring firewood, charcoal, bug spray, sunscreen, and ice because there will be a run on these and other items. "There will be a run on many of these items so it would be wise to pick them up before leaving for the weekend," she said. "And don't forget the can opener."

Campers participating in the Explore Iowa Parks camping contest are reminded to keep their camping receipts. Campsites are available on a first come, first served basis.

For more information, contact Arntzen at 515-242-6233.

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(embargo Wilkinson column until Thursday a.m., July 3)

OSPREYS, EAGLES, FALCONS COME BACK STRONG

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Make no mistake about it. The birds of prey are back. This summer, Iowa has documented its first osprey hatches in well over a century. Peregrine falcon chicks are testing their wings in four different locations. And bald eagle sightings continue to climb. The comeback for the once-endangered birds of prey is linked to improved understanding about habitat, reduced emphasis on pesticides and decades of work by conservationists, landowners and lawmakers.

The improved outlook for peregrines and bald eagles has been on the radar screen for a decade or so. It is ospreys, though, that soar to center stage this year. Just a few days after documentation of an osprey chick at Spirit Lake in Dickinson County comes word of *three* in a nest on Coralville Reservoir, in eastern Iowa. It was at least 1892, when there was last a report of an osprey egg in the Hawkeye State.

For several years, young osprey have been hacked--placed in controlled surroundings before learning to fly—at Coralville, Hartman Reserve in Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Saylorville Reservoir in central Iowa. The recovery plan was to establish home territories for the young birds. As they matured, they would return to those areas. It has paid off at the Coralville site. The male is from the 1998 release there. The female comes from the 2000 release at Saylorville.

"It's been a tremendous job by all the people involved. It's been a great reward for all the volunteers who have helped," said Jodeane Cancilla, director of the Macbride raptor project, based in Johnson County. Cancilla estimates more than 100 people have been involved as volunteers in the osprey program since 1997.

The Macbride Raptor Project has been the backbone of the eastern Iowa recovery, just as other nonprofits and volunteers take on hacking, feeding and monitoring chores at the other release sites. That's critical with reduced wildlife diversity funding from state and federal levels. "We can do the permitting and paperwork; some of the technical assistance," notes Department of Natural Resources wildlife technician Pat Schlarbaum. "But they do the fundraising, the monitoring and the other work on site and in the communities. Each release site has a volunteer coordinator."

The young birds will be banded this month, to aid in future identification. As they take wing, boaters and birdwatchers can identify the black 'mask' pattern developing. As they mature, the distinctive black 'elbow' patches are noticed on soaring birds.

As ospreys mark a comeback 'first' in Iowa, bald eagle populations just keep on growing. "From reports of new eagle nests coming in, I estimate there are 160 out there," says Bruce Ehresman, a Department of Natural Resources wildlife diversity biologist. It was just 1977 when the first bald eagle was hatched, from a nest in northeast Iowa, marking a milestone in conservation circles; the return of our nation's symbol. The numbers have soared since. By 1991, there were 13 active nests. In '98 there were 84. "At one time, we were hoping for 100, then 200," recalls Ehresman. "Now, we have no idea where this will end up! We do know that we see continued strong recovery."

Ehresman says there are several nests with three young; uncommon for a bird that more often raises one or maybe two fledglings. The eagle's precarious status on the federal Endangered Species list, following widespread DDT poisoning and loss of habitat has been well documented over the years. That is why conservationists hailed the movement of the eagle from 'endangered' to 'threatened' in 1995. Now, Ehresman says initial conversations are underway to remove even that improved status. "It still has protection under the Bald Eagle Protection Act. But this latest move is real exciting."

Then there is the peregrine falcon. More than a decade after being released atop downtown buildings in Iowa, the globe's fastest species is reinforcing its clawhold. Falcon pairs in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and the Quad Cities all hatched four chick clutches this year, though the Quad Cities birds were removed from their home *under* the Mississippi River bridge to Bluffton, where falcon breeder Bob Anderson could monitor them. In Louisa County, a nest of three is active. Two more chicks hatched on a cliff at Lansing, but were apparently taken by predators.

"With that Lansing nest, we had reports of eight wild nesting pairs in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota this spring," reports Schlarbaum. "And at least one pair (at Queens Bluff in Wisconsin) has Iowa bands. On top of that, we have reports of a male defending a territory in Ottumwa, often a step taken by a near mature bird, a year away from attracting a mate and establishing a nest."

Years—decades—of hard work, fundraising, retrieving fallen birds in city streets and dawn to dusk monitoring are paying off for volunteers and biologists who have nursed the top of the food chain predators back to health. Now, they see the results soaring.

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EFFIGY MOUNDS-YELLOW RIVER FOREST BIRD CONSERVATION AREA DEDICATION

A ceremony to dedicate Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest region as a state and national Bird Conservation Area is scheduled for Tuesday, July 8, at 1:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Effigy Mounds National Monument visitor center, 2 miles north of Marquette on the Great River Road. Hosts are the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the National Park Service (NPS). Brief presentations and unveiling of a special Bird Conservation Area sign will be followed by an opportunity for a guided hike at Effigy Mounds National Monument.

“Designation of Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest as a Bird Conservation Area (BCA), gives national recognition to the area, due to its importance for resident and migratory woodland birds,” says Bruce Ehresman, DNR Wildlife Diversity Program Biologist. “This area is critical habitat for forest nesting birds, such as cerulean warbler, wood thrush, Acadian flycatcher, yellow-throated vireo, and many other species suffering nationwide declines.”

Establishing Bird Conservation Areas in Iowa is a priority for DNR’s Wildlife Diversity Program. The idea for BCAs grew out of the federal Partners in Flight program and is part of a larger international effort promoting “all bird conservation.” It emphasizes that sustaining viable bird populations requires habitat conservation at a large landscape level. The model BCA encompasses at least 10,000 acres and includes a combination of well-managed public and private lands. Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest becomes Iowa’s fourth official Bird Conservation Area and the first that is geared toward forest bird protection. This is also Iowa’s largest BCA. It includes about 135,000 acres, of which approximately 44 percent are woodlands.

The Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest BCA is an example of state, federal, and county agencies, as well as private organizations and citizens, cooperating together to emphasize the importance of bird habitat. Some of these partners include the National Park Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Audubon Iowa, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Clayton County Conservation Board, and private landowners. “This total effort represents a partnership that serves as an excellent example of ways to better conserve all natural resources in this unique northeastern Iowa landscape,” says Doug Harr, DNR wildlife diversity program coordinator. He explains that bird watching is now among the nation’s fastest-growing outdoor activities, and this

new BCA might attract birders from around the country. That could enhance the local tourist economy while it also helps the areas bird life.

For more information, contact Ehresman at (515) 432-2823 or Harr at (515) 281-4815.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of July 1, 2003

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Southwest

Green Valley (Union): Bluegills are being caught on the spawning beds using small baits. Largemouth bass can be caught with crankbaits along shore. Channel catfish fishing is good using cut bait and liver.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Bluegills are being caught on the spawning beds near the back of the bay area, on the west side of the lake. Channel catfish can be caught off the steep points.

Three Mile (Union): Walleyes are good using leeches, night crawlers, or crankbaits on roadbed and main points. Anglers drifting some of the flats are catching walleyes as well. Channel catfish are being caught on night crawlers or cut bait off the rocks. Crappies are being caught in 7 to 10 feet of water near structure. Largemouth bass fishing is good throughout the lake. Bluegills are good using wax worms or small night crawlers.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish fishing is good in the warmer bays. Walleye fishing is good using leaches on the points. Anglers are catching a lot of yellow bass.

Little River (Decatur): Crappies are being caught in the rocks and along jetties. Bluegills are on spawning beds and along jetties and can be caught using small baits. Some walleye are being caught trolling crankbaits around the larger points and along the dam. Channel catfish fishing is best using cut bait and liver in bays.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Bluegills can be caught by drift fishing the channel along the south shore.

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie fishing is fair using tube jigs tipped with a minnow or minnows suspended from a bobber around brush piles or suspended in 8 to 10 feet of water. Catfish fishing has been good on liver.

Cold Springs (Cass): Catfish are being caught on liver and prepared baits.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Anglers are catching good numbers of channel catfish in the evening using prepared baits or shrimp at south side by picnic area.

Greenfield (Adair): Fishing is fair for 8-inch bluegills using jigs and/or night crawlers along shoreline and around brush piles. Anglers are also catching lots of small largemouth bass.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is good for 7 inch crappies in the evening hours using minnows and good for channel catfish using prepared stink bait or cut fish.

Nodaway (Adair): Bluegills are biting on jigs/night crawlers along the shore and around structure.

Morman Trail (Adair): Anglers have been catching bluegills along the shoreline. Walleye fishing is good on cloudy days or toward evening using chartreuse jigs and minnows.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is good for 8-inch crappies on jigs/minnows around brush piles. Channel catfish fishing is good using liver. Bluegills are being caught on small jigs or a small piece of night crawler on a small hook suspended with a bobber near the shoreline. Largemouth bass fishing has been good.

Willow (Harrison): Largemouth bass fishing is good using a variety of baits. Anglers are catching 1-1/2 pound channel catfish on liver, night crawlers and prepared baits.

Desoto Bend (Harrison): Bluegill fishing is good during the early evening hours. Anglers are catching channel catfish using liver and prepared baits.

Farm Ponds: Largemouth bass and channel catfish fishing is good. Anglers are reminded that permission needs to be granted to fish on private farm ponds.

Big Creek Lake (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been excellent, with some of the best success in 8 to 10 feet of water using pieces of worms and slip bobbers. Walleye fishing has been excellent using lead-headed jigs and minnows, although most walleye caught are below the 15-inch legal size limit. Channel catfish fishing has been good with cut and stink baits.

Beaver Lake (Dallas): Bluegill and crappie fishing is good with the best areas around the woody structure along the shorelines. Largemouth bass fishing has also been good using a variety of lures. Some nice-sized bullheads are also in Beaver Lake, try using night crawlers around the jetties.

Don Williams (Boone): Bluegill and crappie fishing is good with the best fishing in the mornings and evenings. Channel catfish fishing is good using night crawlers in the north end of the lake. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair using top-water lures around shoreline structure.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been good using night crawlers or wax worms. Redear sunfish fishing has also been good with the best success using wax worms fished close to the bottom around the vegetation and woody areas and small coves. Crappie fishing is fair using crappie jigs and/or wax worms or worms. Largemouth bass – primarily sub-legal size fish – are being caught on crankbaits. Channel catfish fishing has been good.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill and redear have been caught using traditional baits and lures. Some largemouth bass are being caught on crankbaits, although as in Lake Ahquabi, most fish are sub-legal.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been fair for boat anglers in deeper water using jigs and minnows. Most fish are 9 to 10 inches. Channel catfish fishing has been good using night crawlers.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappie and bluegill fishing has been fair to good with anglers using jigs and minnows and/or worms. Largemouth bass has been slow with the majority taken along the face of the dam using spinners and top-water lures. Channel catfish are being taken in the shallower areas using night crawlers and stink baits.

Hickory Grove Lake (Story): Crappie fishing is fair using jigs/minnows. Bluegill fishing is good using small hooks and tipped with worms. Channel catfish fishing is good.

Saylorville Lake (Polk): White bass/wiper fishing has been good either trolling or vertical jigging. Channel catfish fishing has picked up using traditional baits. Crappie fishing has been fair with most anglers are using micro-jigs and wax worms, or bobbers and minnow combinations around the mile long bridge. **Tailwater:** White bass fishing has been excellent below Saylorville using lead heads and twister tails. Channel catfish fishing has picked up using traditional baits and a few flathead catfish have been reported caught.

Lake Red Rock (Marion): Crappie fishing has been good particularly around rocky areas of the lake. White bass fishing has been good in areas like below Roberts Creek dam and where there is vertical structure. Channel catfish fishing has been good along shorelines using night crawlers. **Tailwater:** Crappie and white bass/wiper fishing has been good in the tailwater from Lake Red Rock using jigs and/or minnows.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Lake Darling (Washington): The rains last week did not bother the water clarity. Catfishing has been good to fair on a variety of baits, try along the creek channel where they are cruising during the day.

Lake Geode (Henry): A few bluegills are being picked up along the ledges between the deep and shallow water. Six to 8 feet down seems to be where they are. Use a small jig tipped with a wax worm or worm and troll the ledges.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): The lake is down close to normal levels. The water is very clear and the boat ramps are in good condition. A few channel catfish are being caught at the upper end of the main lake; night crawlers and minnows are working best. The Toolesboro road remains closed.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Channel catfish have been biting on night crawlers and cut bait. Walleyes have been hitting on night crawlers drifted or trolled around rocky points.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Largemouth bass have been hitting artificial presentations. Early mornings and evening has been the most productive time. Bluegills have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a chunk of night crawler.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Channel catfish have been biting on liver and cut bait. Bluegills have been hitting on small jigs.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial lures. Channel catfish have been biting on night crawlers and liver.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Catfishing has been fair to slow on various baits close to the rock walls. Crappie fishing has been slow. A few fish continue to be caught close to the rock walls and deeper brush piles.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has slowed; a few fish are still being caught throughout the lake. Catfish continue to bite throughout the lake on dip baits and night crawlers. Walleye fishing has been slow. A few fish are being caught on leeches and crankbaits.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): White bass fishing has been good on various spinners, especially white. Largemouth bass fishing continues to be good on artificial baits.

Lake Iowa (Iowa): Catfish have been biting close to shore on various prepared baits and night crawlers. Bluegill fishing has been fair on jigs and worms in deeper water areas and under overhanging vegetation near the shore.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Catfish continue to bite on various baits near the shore. Bluegill and redear sunfish continue to be caught near the bank on worms and leeches. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited.

Wapsipinicon River (Jones): Fishing has been good for catfish and walleye using shiners below the dam at Anamosa.

Iowa River (Johnson): Catfishing has been good throughout the river on shad guts and stink bait.

Iowa River (Louisa): Catfishing is fair on minnows and night crawlers. Anglers are also having some luck on stink bait. Water levels are about right for boating. Last week's rain helped river conditions.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): Water levels are just about right for navigating the river right now. The catfish fishing is still only fair. Try a few grass frogs for some good action. There is a reason when you chase frogs into the river that they don't stay there and it is not because they cannot swim!

Cedar River (Benton, Linn, and Cedar): River conditions are high and muddy.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River: The water in Pool 10 is at 614.5 and water temperature is 75 degrees. **Pools 9-11:** Fishing is excellent for channel catfish using prepared stink baits or night crawlers. In Pool 9 walleye are biting on crankbaits fished near wing dams and in Minnesota and Winneshiek sloughs. Largemouth Bass are also actively biting on buzz baits and spinners in pool 10 Mudhen Lake and Harpers Slough, near Harpers Ferry. Smallmouth and white bass are biting along the rocks in Ackermans' s Cut in Pool 11.

Pools 12-13: Channel catfish are good on prepared baits, cheese baits, night crawlers, or leeches fished along the rocks. South Sabula Lake (Pools 13) is good for bluegills on grubs or wax worms. Crappie fishing is good using minnows. **Pool 14:** Walleye and channel catfish are biting off the wing dams in the Clinton area.

Turkey River (Howard): Smallmouth bass fishing is excellent on black jigs.

Cedar River (Mitchell and Floyd): The river is up and muddy, but channel catfish are biting good on night crawlers and cut bait.

Cedar River (Bremer and Black Hawk): Channel catfish are good on stink baits and chicken liver.

Shell Rock River (Bremer and Butler): Channel catfish are good on stink baits and chicken liver.

Wapsipinicon River (Buchanan): Walleye fishing is fair on jigs tipped with half of a night crawler. Channel catfish are biting on a variety of baits.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Channel catfish are good on night crawlers and chicken liver. Walleye fishing is good to excellent on jigs tipped with a piece of night crawler or leech fished along rocky areas. Northern pike and smallmouth bass (10 to 12 inches) are also biting.

Casey Lake (Tama): Fishing is good for bluegill drifting small jigs and worms. Largemouth bass are good on rubber worms. Channel catfish are hitting chicken liver.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Largemouth bass fishing is good on plastic baits. Fishing is excellent for 8 to 9-inch crappies on small jigs. Bluegill fishing is good on light tackle.

Trout fishing and stream conditions are excellent. For current trout stocking information, contact the Big Spring Hatchery at 563-245-1699, Decorah Hatchery at 563-382-3315 or Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-5736. You can also view the trout stocking calendar on-line by going to www.iowadnr.com, clicking on **Fish and Fishing** and then choosing **Favorite Pages**.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Largemouth bass fishing is good in Angler's Bay using top-water lures. Walleye fishing has slowed after the recent storm fronts. Anglers are catching a few fish in Angler's Bay, by the footbridge and at Buffalo Run.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching bluegills around boat docks and in Triboji. The best bait is a small hair jig, preferably black. Largemouth bass are starting to bite along the weed lines. Walleyes are being caught along the weed lines using a leech and a bobber, or crankbaits. Some muskies are being caught in Smith's Bay, Emerson Bay and at the north end.

East Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching bluegills around the docks. Channel catfish are biting at the north end using stink bait.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing is fair to good. Cast twisters to the rock points; use a slip bobber and a leech, or night crawlers at night under a lighted bobber.

Little Sioux River (Clay): Catfish are good using cut bait.

Five Island Lake (Palo Alto): Anglers are catching walleyes while trolling. Crappie and bluegill are also being caught.

Lost Island Lake (Palo Alto and Clay): Channel catfish are biting.

Silver Lake (Palo Alto): Bullhead fishing is excellent using traditional bullhead rigs.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): Channel catfish are good using chicken liver and chubs. Catfish are ranging from 1 to 4 pounds. Crappie, bluegill and yellow perch fishing is good, although the fish are on the small side. Try using a small hook tipped with a wax worm.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is good. Anglers drifting minnows and leeches are catching walleyes. Crankbaits trolled in 6 to 12 feet of water is also providing good walleye action. Remember the 14-inch minimum length limit on walleyes. Channel catfish is good using chicken liver, stink bait and chubs.

Briggs Woods (Hamilton): Bluegills are good using small pieces of night crawler and small jigs.

Boone River (Hamilton): Channel catfish are hitting chicken liver and stink bait.

Little Wall Lake (Hamilton): Largemouth bass are hitting crankbaits and rubber worms.

Eldred Sherwood (Hancock): Bluegills are hitting on small pieces of night crawler and small jigs. Largemouth bass fishing is good using spinner baits and top-water lures.

Upper and Lower Pine lakes (Hardin): Largemouth bass fishing has been good using spinner baits, crankbaits or jigs. Bluegills are good using pieces of night crawler.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): A few channel catfish are being caught, but the action has slowed.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Channel catfish are fair around the islands.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Work slip bobbers along the trees for crappies. Bass are located anywhere there is cover. Many are in along the shoreline riprap. A variety of lures are working, with the best being various plastic worm presentations. Small sunfish are plentiful. Try fishing 10 to 15 feet of water for larger sunfish. Walleyes have been hitting crankbaits along the shoreline.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

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